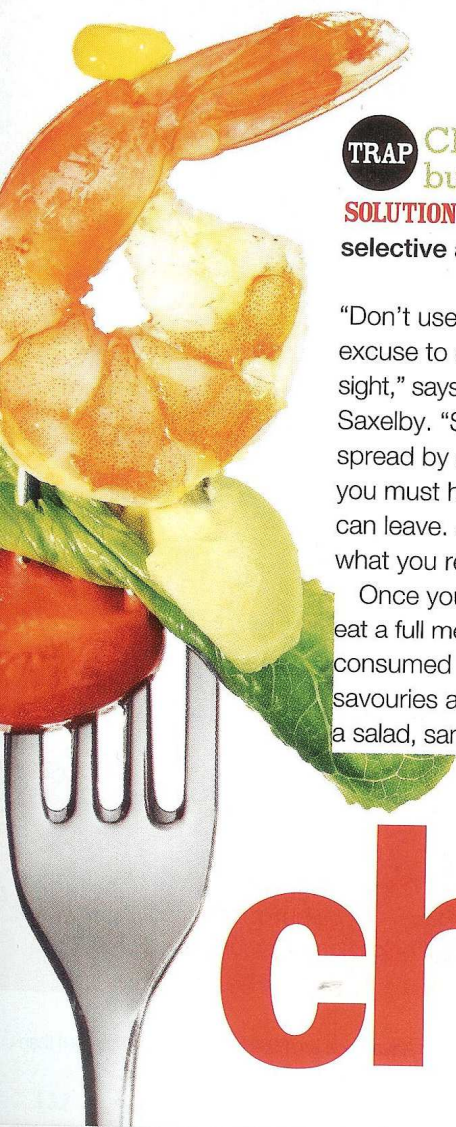


We hardly need proof that holidays are not good for the waistline – what we do need are diet survival strategies, says Pip Harry

**W**ith the body-baring season upon us, everyone wants to stay trim – but this is also the one time of the year when we give ourselves permission to relax our healthy routine. We consulted a few slimming stars and weight-loss experts on foolproof ways to avoid gaining those dreaded holiday kilos.



**TRAP** Christmas-party buffet spreads

**SOLUTION** Eat light and be selective about your food.

“Don’t use Christmas as an excuse to eat everything in sight,” says nutritionist Catherine Saxelby. “Survey the buffet spread by deciding on what you must have and what you can leave. Just have a taste of what you really fancy.”

Once you arrive home, don’t eat a full meal. “It’s likely you’ve consumed enough from the savouries alone. Just have a salad, sandwich or fresh fruit.”

**TRAP** Hasty choices and rushed eating  
**SOLUTION** Stop and savour the flavours.

Make sure you take your time over each meal. Studies suggest savouring the taste and sensation of a food, and chewing it slowly, is not only a more pleasant experience, it will keep you satisfied.

It takes 20 minutes for your brain to realise that your stomach is full, so let it register before you eat too much. “Eat slowly and

enjoy everything you choose to have,” says dietitian Amanda Clarke. “Focus more on the atmosphere, the good company and the gifts, and less on the consumption of food.”



**TRAP** A month of overeating.  
**SOLUTION** Pick your days carefully.

It’s not fun denying yourself over the Christmas period, so choose a couple of key days to overindulge, then revert to healthy eating.

“Keep the overindulgent days to a minimum – the day you finish up at work, Christmas Day and New Year’s Eve,” says Saxelby. “Two days of overeating won’t be bad, but a whole month of festive feeding will pile on the kilos.”

**TRAP** Eating chocolate for breakfast

**SOLUTION** Always start the day right.

It’s easy to reach for milk chocolate instead of fruit and yoghurt during the Christmas break. “Be careful about developing bad habits,” says Renee Newton, co-founder of the Betalife weight-loss website ([www.betalife.com](http://www.betalife.com)). “This is just setting

you up for a day of bad eating. If you really have to do it, start off with a banana, some eggs or a little avocado and baby spinach, and then attack the chocolates.” ▶



# christmas